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INFO RUCNMRC/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 BUENOS AIRES 000343

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR D (NEGROPONTE), WHA/PDA (BARNES), ECA (FARRELL), R (WELCH)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OIIP KPAO OEXC SCUL AR

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: MORE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY RESOURCES NEEDED

11. THIS CABLE CONTAINS AN ACTION REQUEST: SEE PARAGRAPH 11.

12. SUMMARY: THE LEVEL OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN ARGENTINA IS THE HIGHEST IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. WE ARE WORKING HARD TO REVERSE OUR NEGATIVE IMAGE. WE HAVE MADE THIS THE MISSION'S HIGHEST PRIORITY, AND WE BELIEVE WE HAVE FOUND A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS THROUGH YOUTH EXCHANGES AND ENGLISH TEACHING, AS WELL AS THROUGH INCREASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MEDIA OUTREACH. TO MAXIMIZE SUCCESS, HOWEVER, WE NEED MORE, AND MORE CONSISTENTLY AVAILABLE, RESOURCES AND SEEK WASHINGTON SUPPORT IN OBTAINING THEM. END SUMMARY.

ANTI-AMERICANISM IN ARGENTINA

13. THE LEVEL OF ANTI-AMERICANISM I ARGENTINA IS THE HIGHEST IN THE REGION. THE NEGATIVE IMAGE OF THE U.S. STEMS IN PART FROM THE PERCEPTION THAT AMERICA IS A SELF-INTERESTED SUPERPOWER THAT ACTS UNILATERALLY AND WITH A HEAVY, AT TIMES BELLIGERENT, HAND ON THE WORLD STAGE. OUR HIGH NEGATIVES BEAR IMPORTANT ANCILLARY COSTS. A NUMBER OF TOP GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL LEADERS, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE DISCOVERED THERE IS POLITICAL GOLD DOMESTICALLY IN PUBLICLY BASHING THE UNITED STATES FROM TIME TO TIME. THESE OUTBURSTS RESULT IN ANY MOMENTUM GAINED IN THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP GRINDING TO A HALT. JUST LAST DECEMBER AND JANUARY, THE MISSION ENDURED THE LATEST AND MOST DIFFICULT ITERATION OF THIS PATTERN. PERHAPS MORE TROUBLESOME IS THE FACT THAT OUR LOW APPROVAL RATINGS HAVE PERSISTED FOR SIX CONSECUTIVE YEARS. WE FEAR THAT ANTI-AMERICANISM IN ARGENTINA IS NOW BECOMING REFLEXIVE, A DEVELOPMENT THAT MAY, IF IT CONTINUES, BEGIN TO COLOR HOW ARGENTINES VIEW NOT JUST OUR POLICIES, BUT ALSO OUR CULTURE, VALUES, AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THEMSELVES. NEEDLESS TO SAY, SUCH A DEVELOPMENT IN THE HEMISPHERE4S THIRD MOST POPULOUS SPANISH-SPEAKING COUNTRY WOULD BE DISASTROUS FOR LONG-TERM U.S. INTERESTS IN THE REGION.

INVESTING IN YOUTH TO COMBAT ANTI-AMERICANISM

- 14. IN ORDER TO COMBAT THE CORROSIVE EFFECTS OF ANTI-AMERICANISM HERE, WE NEED TO PRESENT OUR NATION IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT AS INTERESTED, ENGAGED, AND DEDICATED TO PROPOSING POLICIES AND FINDING SOLUTIONS THAT HELP AVERAGE CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG AND DISADVANTAGED, IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR LIVES. IN SHORT, WE NEED TO PROMOTE LOCALLY THE UNITED STATES' SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM FOR THE AMERICAS. THERE IS NO BETTER WAY TO DO THIS THAN THROUGH TARGETED PUBLIC DIPLOMACY PROGRAMS THAT DEMONSTRATE OUR INVESTMENT IN YOUTH, THE NEXT GENERATION OF THIS COUNTRY'S LEADERS. IN ADDITION TO BEING LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES FOR THE PARTICIPANTS THEMSELVES, MANY OF WHOM COME FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL, THESE PROGRAMS HAVE PROVEN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC AFFAIRS TOOLS. THEY GENERATE FOR THE POST AND FOR OUR COUNTRY A STEADY STREAM OF POSITIVE PRESS COVERAGE, AS WE ROUTINELY PUBLICIZE OUR PROGRAMS THROUGH PRESS CONFERENCES AND PRESS RELEASES.
- 15. EMBASSY BUENOS AIRES HAS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS COMMITTED SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES TO YOUTH PROGRAMMING. WE HAVE EITHER CREATED, OR PARTICIPATED IN FOR THE FIRST TIME, EIGHT NEW PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO OFFER ARGENTINE YOUTH THE OPPORTUNITY TO TRAVEL TO THE U.S.,

STUDY ENGLISH, ATTEND SEMINARS, OR RECEIVE TRAINING OR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS. IN FY 2007, POST WAS ABLE TO SEND JUST OVER 100 ARGENTINE YOUTH TO THE U.S. ON A VARIETY OF EXCHANGE PROGRAMS. THIS REPRESENTS A 39% INCREASE OVER FY 2006. OUR MOST IMPORTANT SUCH PROGRAM IS THE YOUTH AMBASSADOR (YA) PROGRAM, WHICH WE JUST CONDUCTED FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR.

INVESTMENT IN ENGLISH LEARNING PROGRAMS

16. AS A COROLLARY TO OUR YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMS, POST HAS ALSO INVESTED CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES IN PROMOTING ENGLISH LEARNING. WE SEE YOUTH EXCHANGES AND ENGLISH LEARNING AS LINKED BECAUSE WE HOPE, THROUGH TARGETED ENGLISH PROGRAMS, TO EXPAND THE POOL OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR YOUTH EXCHANGE PROGRAMS. OUR TWO MOST SUCCESSFUL SUCH PROGRAMS ARE THE TEACHER AMBASSADOR PROGRAM AND THE SARMIENTO-MANN ENGLISH LEARNING SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM. UNDER THE TEACHER AMBASSADOR PROGRAM, WE OFFER SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A TWO WEEK STUDY PROGRAM AT THE TEXAS INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONSORTIUM IN AUSTIN, TEXAS. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO FOSTER A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNITED STATES; PROMOTE INCORPORATION OF U.S.-CONTENT TEACHING MATERIALS INTO THE TEACHERS' PEDAGOGY; AND TO ESTABLISH ONGOING RELATIONSHIPSBETWEEN ENGLISH TEACHERS IN ARGENTINA AND THE UNITED STATES. THE SARMIENTO-MANN MICRO-SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM PERMITS STUDENTS WITH LIMITED FINANCIAL MEANS TO STUDY ENGLISH AT BINATIONAL CENTERS (BNCS) THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. LAST YEAR, THE EMBASSY FUNDED 60 SUCH SCHOLARSHIPS AT VARIOUS BNCS.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

17. THE EMBASSY'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE HAS ALSO LAUNCHED A NEW

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COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (CAP) DESIGNED, LIKE THE YOUTH EXCHANGE AND ENGLISH LEARNING PROGRAMS, TO PRESENT THE U.S. IN A MORE POSITIVE LIGHT. CAP BRINGS THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS TO SCHOOLS, ORPHANAGES, COMMUNITY LIBRARIES, DRUG TREATMENT CENTERS, HOMES FOR AT RISK WOMEN AND YOUTH, AND OTHER SUCH INSTITUTIONS IN THE BARRIOS OF BUENOS AIRES TO DONATE BOOKS, COMPUTERS, SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND OTHER NEEDED MATERIALS. THE GOAL IS TO DEEPEN OUR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY, AND ESPECIALLY WITH YOUTH FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS. THE AMBASSADOR HAS ALSO INCLUDED A BOOK DONATION OR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY EVENT ON EVERY VISIT HE HAS MADE TO THE PROVINCES.

PRESS OUTREACH

 $\P 8$. THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN VERY AGGRESSIVE, AND VERY SUCCESSFUL, IN PUBLICIZING PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO CHANGE THE WAY PEOPLE IN ARGENTINA THINK ABOUT AMERICA. WE HAVE TRIPLED PRESS PLACEMENTS SINCE 2005, AND WE HAVE SEEN A CORRESPONDING INCREASE IN POSITIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT ON ISSUES INVOLVING THE U.S. MAINTAINING THIS POSITIVE PRESS MOMENTUM IS A MISSION PRIORITY.

NEEDED: MORE FUNDING

19. POST HAS BEEN FORTUNATE OVER THESE LAST TWO YEARS TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SUPPLEMENT ITS OWN FUNDING ON THESE PROGRAMS WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM WASHINGTON, PARTICULARLY FROM WHA/PDA, FOR WHICH WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT WE NEED MORE AND MORE CONSISTENTLY AVAILABLE FUNDING IF WE ARE GOING TO REVERSE OUR NEGATIVE IMAGE HERE. OUR EXPERIENCE IS THAT THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS BENEFIT OF THESE PROGRAMS FAR EXCEEDS THE RELATIVELY SMALL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT THEY REQUIRE, SO THE AMOUNT OF MONEY WE ARE LOOKING FOR IS NOT GREAT. WE ESTIMATE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE TOTAL COST OF SENDING 5 KIDS ON THE YA PROGRAM IN 2007 WAS LESS THAN \$40,000. IN 2008, WE ARE SENDING 12 YOUTH AMBASSADORS, TEN FINANCED BY WASHINGTON AND TWO BY THE POST. IN BOTH CASES, WASHINGTON FUNDING FOR THE YA PROGRAM, HOWEVER, CAME ABOUT IN AN AD HOC FASHION. IF WE ARE GOING TO "BRAND" THIS PROGRAM IN ARGENTINA IN THE SAME SUCCESSFUL WAY BRAZIL HAS DONE, WE WILL NEED TO HAVE MORE

CONSISTENTLY AVAILABLE FUNDING GOING FORWARD. AS THIS IS BEING WRITTEN, POST HAS NO WAY OF KNOWING, FOR EXAMPLE, WHETHER ARGENTINA WILL BE ON THE LIST TO RECEIVE MONEY FOR A 2009 YA PROGRAM. WE REQUEST WASHINGTON CONSIDER "ADOPTING" THE PROGRAM FOR THIS POST AND FOR THE REGION AS A WHOLE, EITHER BY HOUSING IT IN ECA OR SEEKING COMBINED R AND WHA/PDA RESOURCES TO ENSURE CONTINUITY OF FUNDING.

POST BUDGET SQUEEZE

110. THE COST OF 60 SARMIENTO-MANN SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2007 WAS APPROXIMATELY \$20,000 IN ARGENTINA. WE PLAN TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS THIS YEAR TO 120 AND REQUESTED WASHINGTON FUNDING TO HELP US DO SO. WE WERE ADVISED, HOWEVER, THAT ECA HAS NO FUNDS BUDGETED FOR MICRO-SCHOLARSHIPS FOR WHA IN 2007, FUNDS FOR ONLY 4 WHA POSTS IN 2008, AND THAT ADDITIONAL POSTS WILL COME ON LINE IN 12009. WHAT THIS MEANS IS THAT WE WILL HAVE TO FUND THIS PROGRAM, CENTRAL TO OUR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY MISSION HERE, ENTIRELY FROM THE POST'S BUDGET. SIMILARLY, WE REQUESTED WASHINGTON ASSISTANCE TO HELP FUND A REGIONAL TEACHER AMBASSADOR PROGRAM IN JANUARY. WE WERE ADVISED THAT NO MONEY WAS AVAILABLE, SO ARGENTINA AND CHILE BORE ALL THE COSTS OURSELVES. THE MORE PROGRAMS WE TRY TO "BRAND" USING POST FUNDING ONLY, HOWEVER, THE LESS FLEXIBILITY WE END UP HAVING IN MANAGING OUR REMAINING LIMITED RESOURCES. THIS IS EVEN MORE THE CASE AS WE FACE INFLATION WIDELY ESTIMATED AT NEARLY 20% OVER THE LAST YEAR, INCREASING OUR COSTS SIGNIFICANTLY.

PROGRAMMATIC AREAS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING

- 11. IN OUR RECENTLY SUBMITTED MISSION STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FY 2010, POST IDENTIFIED THE REVERSAL OF THIS COUNTRY'S DEEPLY INGRAINED ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT AS OUR TOP PRIORITY AND IDENTIFIED SPECIFIC PROGRAMMATIC AREAS WHERE WE NEED SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING (OUR REQUEST WAS FOR US550,000) TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE. WE HAVE LISTED THESE PROGRAMS BELOW IN PRIORITY ORDER AND REQUEST WASHINGTON ASSISTANCE IN ALLOCATING THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR US TO IMPLEMENT THEM:
- A) 12 YOUTH AMBASSADORS: \$75,000
- B) 20 TEACHER AMBASSADORS: \$50,000 C) ENGLISH TEACHING FELLOW TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL ENGLISH CURRICULUM,
- AT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S REQUEST: \$15,000
- D) ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS (YOUNG U.S. STUDENTS WHO TEACH
- ENGLISH AT LOCAL TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES): \$20,000 E) EIGHT S&T SPECIALISTS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, FROM ARGENTINE UNIVERSITIES TO THE U.S. FOR EXCHANGE, AT MINISTRY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY REQUEST: \$40,000
- F) COMMUNITY ACTION DONATIONS: \$40,000
- G) SPORTS -- 10 HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SOCCER EXCHANGE: \$40,000
- H) U.S. STUDIES SEMINARS IN ARGENTINA, ONE SEMINAR FOR EACH TYPE OF

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AUDIENCE (JOURNALISTS, TEACHERS, YOUNG LEADERS, PROFESSIONALS):

- I) REPORTING TOURS TO THE UNITED STATES FOR JOURNALISTS: \$40,000
- J) SCIENCE CAMP (10 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS): \$50,000 K) MUSIC EXCHANGE (10 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS): \$40,000
- L) DANCE EXCHANGE (10 HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS): \$40,000
- M) ENGLISH CLASSES FOR JOURNALISTS (FOUR CLASSES PER YEAR): \$5,000
- 112. COMMENT: POST UNDERSTANDS THAT WE ARE IN A TIGHT BUDGET ENVIRONMENT, BUT URGES WASHINGTON TO CONSIDER THE IMPACT THAT A MODEST INFUSION OF FUNDS CAN HAVE IN A COUNTRY LIKE ARGENTINA. PROGRAMS THAT REACH OUT TO THE YOUNG AND THE UNDERSERVED CAN HAVE A DRAMATIC IMPACT HERE, NOT JUST ON THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED BUT ON A WIDER AUDIENCE WHO SHARE THE EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE MEDIA. WE HAVE WORKED HARD TO BE A LEADER IN CREATING INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS, SEVERAL OF THEM REGIONAL IN NATURE, THAT PROMOTE THE VISION OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITIVE MESSAGE TO THE REGION. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WOULD ALLOW US TO EXPAND THE REACH OF THAT MESSAGE AND IN THE PROCESS CHIP AWAY AT AN UNHEALTHY, PERSISTENT, AND PERVASIVE ANTI-AMERICANISM IN THE COUNTRY. END COMMENT.
- 113. TO SEE MORE BUENOS AIRES REPORTING, VISIT OUR CLASSIFIED WEBSITE AT:

HTTP://WWW.STATE.SQOV.GOV/P/WHA/BUENOSAIRES

WAYNE